

# Project Dust

## Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy



**Help for non-English Speakers:**

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact [projectdust@hotmail.com](mailto:projectdust@hotmail.com).

### Project Dust

### Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

## Purpose

The Project Dust Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy demonstrates our commitment to creating and maintaining a child safe and child friendly First Nations dance school, where children and young people are safe and feel safe.

This policy provides an overview of our approach to implementing [Ministerial Order 1359](#) (PDF, 363KB) which sets out how the Victorian Child Safe Standards apply in school environments. Although we are not based in Victoria and are not mandated to implement these standards – the dance industry is unregulated -, they ethically align with our own standards.

It informs our community of everyone's obligations to act safely and appropriately towards children and guides our processes and practices for the safety and wellbeing of students across all areas of our work.

## Scope

This policy:

- applies to all Project Dust staff, volunteers, and contractors whether or not they work in direct contact with students.
- applies in all physical and online learning environments used by students.

## Definitions

The following terms in this policy have [specific definitions](#):

- child
- child safety
- child abuse
- child-connected work
- child-related work
- school environment
- school boarding environment
- school staff
- school boarding premises staff
- school governing authority
- school boarding premises governing authority
- student
- volunteer

## Statement of commitment to child safety

Project Dust is a child safe organisation which welcomes all children, young people, and their families.

We are committed to providing environments where our students are safe and feel safe, where their participation is valued, their views respected, and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives. Our child safe policies, strategies and practices are inclusive of the needs of all children and students.

We have no tolerance for child abuse and take proactive steps to identify and manage any risks of harm to students in our learning environments.

We promote positive relationships between students and adults and between students and their peers. These relationships are based on trust and respect.

We take proactive steps to identify and manage any risk of harm to students in our organisation. When child safety concerns are raised or identified, we treat these seriously and respond promptly and thoroughly.

Particular attention is given to the child safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, international students, students with disabilities, those unable to live at home, children and young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) and other students experiencing risk or vulnerability. Inappropriate or harmful behaviour targeting students based on these or other characteristics, such as racism or homophobia, are not tolerated at Project Dust, and any instances identified will be addressed with appropriate consequences.

Child safety is a shared responsibility. Every person involved in Project Dust has an important role in promoting child safety and wellbeing and promptly raising any issues or concerns about a child's safety.

We are committed to regularly reviewing our child safe practices, and seeking input from our students, families, staff, and volunteers to inform our ongoing strategies.

## Roles and responsibilities

### Director

Our Director is responsible for ensuring that a strong child safe culture is created and maintained, and that policies and practices are effectively developed and implemented in accordance with Ministerial Order 1359.

Our Director will:

- ensure effective child safety and wellbeing governance, policies, procedures, codes, and practices are in place and followed.
- model a child safe culture that facilitates the active participation of students, families, and staff in promoting and improving child safety, cultural safety and wellbeing.
- enable inclusive practices where the diverse needs of all students are considered.
- reinforce high standards of respectful behaviour between students and adults, and between students.
- promote regular open discussion on child safety issues within the Project Dust community.
- facilitate regular professional learning for staff and volunteers (where appropriate) to build deeper understandings of child safety, cultural safety, student wellbeing and prevention of responding to abuse.
- create an environment where child safety complaints and concerns are readily raised, and no one is discouraged from reporting an allegation of child abuse to relevant authorities.

### Project Dust staff and volunteers

All staff and volunteers will:

- participate in child safety and wellbeing induction and training provided by Project Dust and always follow Project Dust's child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures.
- act in accordance with our Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- identify and raise concerns about child safety issues in accordance with our Child Safety Responding and Reporting Obligations Policy and Procedures.
- ensure students' views are taken seriously and their voices are heard about decisions that affect their lives.
- implement inclusive practices that respond to the diverse needs of students.

### **Specific staff child safety responsibilities**

## **Child Safety Code of Conduct**

Our Child Safety Code of Conduct sets the boundaries and expectations for appropriate behaviours between adults and students. It also clarifies behaviours that are not acceptable in our physical and online environments.

We ensure that students also know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable so that they can be clear and confident about what to expect from adults in the school.

The Child Safety Code of Conduct also includes processes to report inappropriate behaviour.

## **Managing risks to child safety and wellbeing**

At Project Dust we identify, assess, and manage risks to child safety and wellbeing in our physical and online learning environments. These risks are managed through our child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, and practices, and in our activity specific risk registers.

Our Child Safety Risk Register is used to record any identified risks related to child abuse alongside actions in place to manage those risks. Our Director will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the actions in the Child Safety Risk Register at least annually.

## **Establishing a culturally safe environment**

At Project Dust, we are committed to establishing an inclusive and culturally safe First Nations dance school where the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, values and practices are respected.

We think about how every student can have a positive experience in a safe environment. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, we recognise the link between culture, identity and safety and actively create opportunities for our students and community to have a voice and presence in our planning, policies, and activities.

## **Student empowerment**

To support child safety and wellbeing at Project Dust, we work to create an inclusive and supportive environment that encourages students and families to contribute to our child safety approach and understand their rights and their responsibilities.

Respectful relationships between students are reinforced and we encourage strong friendships and peer support in the dance school to ensure a sense of belonging.

We inform students of their rights and give them the skills and confidence to recognise unsafe situations with adults or other students and to speak up and act on concerns relating to themselves or their peers. We ensure our students know who to talk to if they are worried or feeling unsafe and we encourage them to share concerns with a trusted adult at any time.

When Project Dust is gathering information in relation to a complaint about alleged misconduct or abuse of a child, we will listen to the complainant's account and take them seriously, check our understanding of the complaint, support the individual and keep them (and their parents and carers, as appropriate) informed.

## **Family engagement**

Our families and community have an important role in monitoring and promoting children's safety and wellbeing and helping children to raise any concerns.

To support family engagement, at Project Dust we are committed to providing families and community with accessible information about our school's child safe policies and practices and involving them in our approach to child safety and wellbeing.

We will create opportunities for families to have input into the development and review of our child safety policies and practices and encourage them to raise any concerns and ideas for improvement.

## **Diversity and equity**

As a child safe organisation, we celebrate the rich diversity of our students, families and community and promote respectful environments that are free from discrimination. Our focus is on wellbeing and growth for all.

We recognise that every child has unique skills, strengths and experiences to draw on.

We pay particular attention to individuals and groups of children and young people in our community with additional and specific needs. This includes tailoring our child safety strategies and supports to the needs of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- children and young people with disabilities.
- children unable to live at home or impacted by family violence.
- international students.
- children and young people who identify as LGBTIQ+.

## **Suitable staff and volunteers**

Although Project Dust operates in an unregulated dance industry, all classes are run by qualified dance teachers and dance practitioners, with current WWVP cards. We apply robust child safe recruitment, induction, training, and supervision practices to ensure that all current and future staff, contractors, and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

When engaging staff and volunteers to perform child-related work, we:

- sight, verify and record the person's Working with Children clearance or equivalent background check such as a Victorian teaching registration
- collect and record:
  - proof of the person's identity and any professional or other qualifications.
  - the person's history of working with children.
  - references that address suitability for the job and working with children.

All newly appointed staff and volunteers will be expected to participate in our child safety and wellbeing induction program. The program will include a focus on:

- the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document).
- the Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- any other child safety and wellbeing information that Project Dust considers appropriate to the nature of the role.

## **Ongoing supervision and management of staff**

All staff engaged in child-connected work will be supervised appropriately to ensure that their behaviour towards children is safe and appropriate.

Inappropriate behaviour towards children and young people will be managed swiftly and in accordance with our policies and our legal obligations. Child safety and wellbeing will be paramount.

## Child safety knowledge, skills and awareness

Ongoing training and education are essential to ensuring that staff understand their roles and responsibilities and develop their capacity to effectively address child safety and wellbeing matters.

In addition to the child safety and wellbeing induction, our staff will participate in a range of training and professional learning to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary to maintain a child safe environment.

Staff child safety and wellbeing training will be delivered at least annually and will include guidance on:

- our dance school's child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures, codes, and practices.
- recognising indicators of child harm including harm caused by other children and students.
- responding effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and supporting colleagues who disclose harm.
- how to build culturally safe environments for children and students.
- information sharing and recordkeeping obligations.
- how to identify and mitigate child safety and wellbeing risks in our learning environment.

Other professional learning and training on child safety and wellbeing, for example, training for our volunteers, will be tailored to specific roles and responsibilities and any identified or emerging needs or issues.

## Complaints

Project Dust fosters a culture that encourages staff, volunteers, students, parents, and the community to raise concerns and complaints. This makes it more difficult for breaches of the code of conduct, misconduct or abuse to occur and remain hidden.

We have clear pathways for raising complaints and concerns and responding and this is documented in our Complaint Policy.

## Communications

Project Dust is committed to communicating our child safety strategies to the school community through:

- ensuring that key child safety and wellbeing policies are available on our website including the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy (this document), and Child Safety Code of Conduct.
- updates in our regular term emails.

## Review of child safety practices

At Project Dust, we have established processes for the review and ongoing improvement of our child safe policies, procedures, and practices.

We will:

- review and improve our policy every 2 years or after any significant child safety incident.
- analyse any complaints, concerns, and safety incidents to improve policy and practice.
- act with transparency and share pertinent learnings and review outcomes with Project Dust staff and our community.

## Policy status and review

The Director is responsible for reviewing and updating the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy at least every two years. The review will include input from students, parents/carers and the community.

## Approval

<b>Created date</b>	<b>20/04/2023</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	Consultation period with families 20/04/2023 – 02/05/2023
<b>Endorsed by</b>	Emma Laverty, Director
<b>Endorsed on</b>	02/05/2023
<b>Next review date</b>	02/05/2025